

R. SKENE—*Arab and Swahili Dances and Ceremonies.*

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are given vent to by singing and running round in a circle, in time to the beating of a drum, very much in the same manner as children do. No invitations are given, and anyone may join in. No refreshments are handed round.

THE MDEMA DANCE.

This also is an importation from Nyasaland (see Ki-Nyasa dance), and is danced by the slave population only, either by day or by night. It is exactly like the Ki-Nyasa dance described above, with the exception that no iron bells are strapped round the knees, and it is, if possible, of a simpler character, the Ki-Nyasa being in truth simple enough. Like the latter it is merely a vent for high animal spirits. No refreshments are given and no invitations are necessary.

THE KINDIMBA.

The Kindimba is not a dance, but a musical entertainment into which enters a slight element of the mystical. It is only given by people of the slave class in fulfilment of a vow. Any person who greatly desires something or some event to come to pass makes a vow to give a Kindimba if his wish is fulfilled.

Invitations are issued to his friends by the person who is giving the entertainment, and they assemble at his house. The men and women sit together either indoors if there is room, or else in the open. Songs are sung by a leader, the other guests joining in the chorus, and clapping their hands in time to the singing, which is accompanied by a small drum called a *ngumbaro*, very like a *marwasi* (see Shebani dance), with this difference that only one end is covered with a goat skin, while in the *marwasi* both ends are covered. The other end, which is open, is made to rest on the chest or stomach of the player, who performs upon it in that position with both hands. Hard grains of maize are placed in dry gourds of various sizes, and these are rattled in time to the singing.

The entertainment partakes of the nature of thanksgiving, and frivolous songs are therefore avoided. Although not exactly of a religious character, a certain amount of superstition is far from being foreign to the Kindimba.

THE VUGO.

At a wedding, a procession of women is often formed in the evening after dark to parade the streets, and is called a Vugo. The women sing in chorus to the sound of buffalo horns beaten with short sticks. No men are allowed to take part in the procession, which is both an Arab and a Swahili custom.

THE KINYAGO DANCE.

This is a Swahili medicine-dance usually held outside the town in a plantation on a moonless night. No artificial lights are allowed. Swahilis who have any

535 pretensions to being medicine-men inform their friends that a Kinyago is to be
 756 danced at a certain spot on a certain night, and a crowd consequently congregates there. The medicine-men, most of whom in Malindi District apart from Giriyama are of Shambala slave origin, make themselves up with the help of clothes stuffed with grass to represent certain wild animals, such as elephants, lions, etc. A ring having been made in the waiting crowd, a medicine-man thus disguised as an animal suddenly dashes from behind a convenient bush and enters the ring, where he capers about and makes a noise in imitation of the beast he represents. On getting tired he retires again behind the convenient bush, and another disguised medicine-man takes his place in the ring and so on. A *msondo* drum is used, described above (see Ki-Nyasa dance). The crowd takes no part in the performance.

535 The Kinyago is, of course, a heathen dance from Nyasaland imported by
 527 slaves. It takes place usually after a good harvest, and is intended more or less as
 756 a thanksgiving to the spirits that control the rain and the abundance of food generally. It is also intended by the medicine-men to impress the people with the powers which they ascribe to themselves of being able to change the shape of their bodies into that of any wild animal. But these pretensions are not accorded much credence nowadays in the Malindi District.¹

¹ NGOMA YA PEPO.

776 The Swahili word *pepo*¹ is the equivalent of the Arab word *jin*, or devil or
 753 evil spirit. The people inhabiting the coastal zone, both Arabs and Swahilis, believe in the existence of these beings, some of whom are considered harmless while others, entering into the human body, create various ills and pains, insensibility or sometimes a demented state accompanied by violent gestures. It is quite evident, even to a layman, that these ills are due to a disturbance of the nervous system of imaginative and highly-strung individuals. Thus one finds that the great majority of the people who get *pepo* are women.

753 The native cure for *pepo* is principally drumming. The natives of Africa
 533 are particularly sensitive to rhythm, pure and simple, even more so perhaps than Europeans. The rhythm of certain kinds of drumming has the effect of exciting the nerves to an ecstatic degree, while other rhythms appear to have the contrary effect upon the nervous system of Africans. It is the latter rhythms that are used as a cure for *pepo*.

This physiological effect of rhythmic drumming is, however, unknown to the inhabitants of the coastal zone, and believing as they do, that the nervous disturbance known as *pepo* is caused by the presence of evil spirits in the body, they set about propitiating the *jin* and putting him in a good temper by giving a drumming

¹ This reminds one of some of the corn dances recorded by Sir J. G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough*; and by Professor Ridgway in his *Dramas and Dramatic Dances of Non-European Races* (1915), pp. 335-374.

entertainment in his honour, so as to induce him to depart from the body of the person possessed. 753
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The exorcising of the *pepo* is conducted by a professional man or elderly woman known as a *fundi* or *mganga* who specializes in certain kinds of *pepo*. 753
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The *pepo* themselves are divided into various tribes such as the *pepo ya ki-galla*, *pepo ya ki-arabu*, *pepo ya ki-somali*, *pepo ya ki-shakini*, *pepo ya i-pemba*, *pepo ya ki-nubi*, etc., and some even are said to be like animals, such as the *pepo ya ng'ombe* and the *pepo ya punda*. Besides belonging to various tribes, the *pepo* have individual names similar to those common to human beings of the same tribe. Thus some *pepo ya ki-galla* are known as Guyo, Barsa, Godana, Galgalo, all of which are fairly common amongst the Gallas on the Tana River. 533
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The *pepo* is recognised by the language it speaks through the lips of the person possessed. The *fundi*s make out that the language spoken is actually Galla, Somali, Arabic, etc., but that it is an ancient form of these languages, and that no one can understand them but the *fundi*s themselves. This, of course, is nonsense, as it is impossible for a person ignorant of a language to speak it suddenly and quite fluently. What actually happens is that the person possessed speaks ordinary Swahili,¹ but being in a state of high nervous tension the voice assumes an unnatural pitch, and the words are spoken indistinctly and interlarded with inarticulate sounds, so that they may be said to assume, with a stretch of imagination, either an Arab, a Somali, or any other accent, and, together with the inarticulate sounds uttered, are interpreted by the "*fundi*" as being ancient Arabic or ancient Somali, or some other ancient language.²

Each *fundi* has his own special set of *pepo* whom he knows by name, and to him only will such *pepo* respond. If a *fundi* is called in to attend to a possessed person, and is unable to make the *pepo* speak to him through the lips of the patient, then he knows that the *pepo* in question is not one of his set, but is a client of some other *fundi*. He then withdraws from the case, and suggests to the relations of the patient that such or such *fundi* be called in.

The first step in the treatment of a possessed person is to get the *pepo* to "come into the head" of the patient and speak to the *fundi*, the object of this being to find out from the *pepo* what would be acceptable to him as an offering in order to induce him to depart from the body of the possessed person. 753
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The method of making the *pepo* speak is by administering *dawa*, or native medicine. The various tribes of *pepo* respond each to its particular kind of *dawa*, which in most cases consists of a decoction of roots mixed with leaves of plants found in the bush, and sometimes fresh seaweed. Each *fundi* has, of course, his own secret prescription. The mixture of roots and leaves is placed in a

¹ This is not certain.—C. W. H.

² For possession by spirits of other tribes, see Junod, *Les Baronga*, pp. 440, 441.

753 pot and made to boil. The patient is made to sit close up to the pot, or, if possible,
 765 over it, and is then entirely covered with a sheet in such a manner as to allow as little
 756 as possible of the vapour from the pot to escape. This is practically a Turkish bath,
 776 the effect on the patient being naturally a soothing one, and on leading questions
 being put to the patient by the *fundi*, the *pepo* will state through the mouth
 of the sick person who he is and how many days' drumming he would like in order
 to induce him to depart and leave the patient in peace. This method of applying
 native medicine is used to make the *pepo* of almost all the heathen tribes
 respond to the *fundi*, provided, of course, that the *fundi* is the right man for
 that particular *pepo*, and provided the right decoction of roots and leaves is used.

If the *fundi* called in has a suspicion that the *pepo* he has to deal with
 belongs to a Moslem tribe, such as Arab, Somali, or Nubi, he does not employ the
 Turkish bath method in order to induce him to speak, but makes a mixture of camphor,
 musk, and saffron, with a little water, and writes with it on a plate the various
 attributes of Allah. By means of a little more of the mixture, the writing is carefully
 washed off the plate into a cup, and is given to the patient to drink. The camphor
 has a soothing effect, and the *pepo* then states who he is and what he wants as
 a propitiation.

The *fundi*, having recognised the *pepo* as one of his set, now comes to an
 agreement with the relations of the sick person as to the amount of the fees to be
 given to him. These vary according to the financial position of the relations, but
 generally range from 5Rs. to 10Rs. Much higher fees are sometimes given, how-
 ever, and the total expenses, including the cost of the food for the *fundi*, the
 drummers, and the guests have been known to amount to 300Rs. The *fundi's*
 fees are paid after he has succeeded in getting rid of the *pepo*.

The drumming and dancing invariably take place indoors, except on the last
 day when the patient is practically cured, and then the dancing goes on outside the
 house.

The various kinds of *pepo* believed to seize people in Malindi are :—

Pepo ya ki-galla

Pepo ya ki-sanya

Pepo ya ki-shakini

Pepo ya ki-rima

Pepo ya ki-nyika

Pepo ya ki-pemba

Pepo ya ki-habshi

Pepo ya ki-arabu

Pepo ya ki-somali

Pepo ya ki-nubi

Pepo ya Ng'ombe

Pepo ya Punda

The names of the *fundi* now practising in Malindi are as follows:—

Mohamed bin Mhaji
 Make Chocho
 Habiba wa Jora
 Biasha wa Ali
 Shaibu wa Saburi
 Fundi Ali
 Fundi Matano
 Said wa Famao
 Hussein (a police constable)
 Kiranja Mhaji
 Mwalim Kai

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When a *fundi* has recognised a *pepo* as one of his own, and when the bargain as to the fees to be paid has been made, he sends round to all the other *fundi*s and invites them to witness his efforts to exorcise the *pepo*.

New clothes must be bought for the *pepo* in all cases, and they are worn by the patient in the manner of the tribe to which the *pepo* belongs.

The following are detailed descriptions of the procedure followed in exorcising the various kinds of *pepo* who are believed to seize people in Malindi:—

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PEPO YA KI-GALLA.

On being called to see a sick person the *fundi* examines the patient and decides whether he is suffering from *pepo* or not. As a rule the decision is in the affirmative. He then orders a "*sadaka*" or sacrifice of food to be made. This varies according to circumstances of the patient and his relations, but it usually consists of boiled rice and goats' meat or fowl. The relations and friends of the sick person partake of this, as well as the *fundi* and his drummers. But before the meal begins, a *mwalim* or person versed in the prayers of the Koran is called in and the *fathiha*—*Illā hāthratī al habībī Muḥamad Nabbi al mustafa* is read over three times. Both prayers and feast take place just outside the house of the patient. But the women remain inside, and the food is taken in to them.

The *fundi* then goes and gets the native medicine necessary to make the *pepo* come into the head of the patient, and state what it wants as propitiation in order to induce it to leave the body of the patient. The medicine used consists of the leaves and small roots of certain trees to be found in the bush. The special kinds of trees used are professional secrets of the *fundi*s, each of whom has his own prescription. Certain kinds of sea-weed gathered from coral rocks at low water are sometimes used, and these together with the roots and leaves are pounded together so as to form a paste which is mixed with water and placed in a pot to boil over a fire in the sick-room. The patient is then made to sit on a stool or native bed

776 over the pot, or as close as possible, and is entirely covered over with a sheet so as
 756 to receive all the vapour from the pot and the heat from the fire.
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757 While this primitive method of giving a Turkish bath is being carried out, the
 171 *fundi* chants an appropriate song of praise to the *pepo*, and the women, if they know the song, join in and clap their hands in time to the tune. This ceremony takes place soon after sunrise, at mid-day, and in the evening from about 7 p.m. to 8.30 or 9 p.m., each session lasting about an hour to an hour and a half, more or less. After each session the *fundi* questions the *pepo* to ascertain what *pepo* he has to deal with and what propitiation it requires, but the *pepo* may refuse to speak at once, and the same ceremonial is repeated every day up to seven days. If by that time the *pepo* has not spoken, the *fundi* usually comes to the conclusion that the *pepo* in question is not one of his clientele, and he suggests that some other *fundi* be called in.

If, however, success is attained in making the *pepo* speak through the lips of the patient, which is very often the case owing to leading questions being asked by the *fundi*, and perhaps to a certain amount of mental ascendancy on his part, to which a hypnotic element may not be foreign, arrangements are then made to fulfil the desires of the *pepo*, which invariably take the form of an *ngoma* or dance repeated every day for seven days, with or without a *pepo* feast, and a male goat to be ridden by the *pepo* on the last day of the dance.

776 Before the dancing begins, new clothes are bought for the *pepo*, and the patient
 535 puts them on. If the latter is a man, a white cloth is tied round his chest and hangs
 756 down to his feet and another white cloth is put over the head and shoulders in such
 171 a manner as to leave only the face visible, the head and neck being covered. A pair of white cotton trousers tight at the ankle are also worn. If the patient is a woman the same clothes are worn, but the first-mentioned cloth is tied round her waist, and not round the chest as in the case of the man.

Guests are invited, both men and women, but the majority of the dancers at an *ngoma ya pepo* are women. The latter are the only ones allowed to enter the sick room, except the *fundi* and his drummers, and one or two male guests by request of the relations of the patient. The *fundi* and his drummers may also sit in the *ukumbi*, or entrance to the house, according to the wishes of the relations.

The dancing begins at eight or nine o'clock in the morning and lasts for two or three hours, or until the patient, impelled by the *pepo*, lifts his hands as a sign of having had enough for the time being. A second session takes place the same day from about 6 p.m. till 9 p.m., and so on every day till the seventh day.

535 *Pepo ya ki-galla* generally begins to take part in the dancing on the third
 755 day of the dance. The patient, while still seated, begins to jerk his shoulders back-
 171 wards and forwards and up and down, in time to the drumming. Then he gradually rises from his seat. A fly-switch, made from the tail of any wild animal which could be used for the purpose is placed in one hand, and a small calabash filled with leaves